

**TESTIMONY OF
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U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 3**

**BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
UNITED STATES SENATE**

**Oversight Hearing on Repeated Flooding Events in Ellicott City, MD:
Reviewing the Federal Role in Preventing Future Events**

August 20, 2018

Chairman Cardin and Members of the Committee. I am Cecil Rodrigues, Deputy Regional Administrator for Region 3 of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the EPA's role in assisting communities to reduce their risks of flooding events like those that occurred in Ellicott City, MD.

Excessive stormwater runoff has serious and costly effects across our country. The EPA considers it one of the leading causes of water quality impairment and diminished watershed health. It can overwhelm our sewer systems, erode our stream banks, pollute our waters and, in cases such as Ellicott City, can devastate our towns.

The EPA works with other federal agencies and the states to reduce stormwater runoff and to build resiliency in our communities. We do that through Clean Water Act (CWA) funding and regulatory programs. And we do it through innovative approaches like the Clean Water Partnership and the Green Streets, Green Jobs, Green Towns (G3) program.

Maryland has been a leader in addressing stormwater runoff. The Maryland Department of the Environment has set aggressive goals to control stormwater as part of its commitment to reduce pollution to local waters and the Chesapeake Bay, requiring

restoration of 20 percent of untreated impervious surface area as part of the Phase 1 jurisdictions' Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permits.

Howard County, which includes Ellicott City, developed a county-wide implementation strategy to address the MS4 requirement, and by the end of September 2016 had restored more than 1,400 acres. Among its other permit related activities, the county created a manual that outlines standards for the design of stormwater systems in new development and redevelopment, and completed detailed assessments and maps for all watersheds within the county.

The EPA assists Maryland and states around the nation in controlling stormwater through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF), which provides low interest loans through the states to support critical water infrastructure projects. Since the inception of the CWSRF program, the EPA's Region 3 has provided states with \$145 million, which they have used to fund 124 stormwater projects, including 30 in Maryland for \$37.4 million. The projects range from green infrastructure to storm sewers.

This administration's focus on accelerating investment in our nation's water infrastructure also includes the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) program that provides long-term loans for a diverse range of regionally and nationally significant water infrastructure projects, including stormwater control projects.

The EPA's Water Infrastructure and Resiliency Finance Center provides technical and financial information to help local officials make informed decisions for stormwater, drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. The Center created a searchable clearinghouse of resource and funding information from the EPA, other federal agencies and state agencies – a one-stop shop for communities to address these issues.

In this region, we have looked beyond traditional funding sources and partnered with the nonprofit and private sectors to create innovative programs that offer the multiple benefits of green infrastructure to capture stormwater. For example, earlier this year, the EPA and the Chesapeake Bay Trust, with support from the City of Baltimore and the

Maryland Department of Natural Resources, provided our eighth set of grants under the Green Streets-Green Jobs-Green Towns (G3) program – nearly \$700,000 with a local match of nearly \$1 million for 21 projects – 10 of which are in Maryland. Since 2011, we have awarded \$8.4 million to 145 projects throughout the region, leveraged with \$13.8 million in matching funds.

The G3 program helps communities implement plans that reduce stormwater runoff and flooding, increase the number and amount of green spaces in urban areas, and improve the health of local waters and quality of life in cities and towns – all of which can be replicated elsewhere in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, including Ellicott City.

The EPA also encourages local governments to work with us in establishing community based, public private partnerships to generate faster, cheaper and greener controls for stormwater, and provide considerable benefits for the local economy and the community. Two examples modeled on the EPA's approach are the Clean Water Partnership in Prince George's County and a similar one in Chester, Pennsylvania. In addition to addressing stormwater, these partnerships support local jobs, training opportunities and assistance for small and minority-owned businesses with significant local economic impact.

We need to continue to support innovations in project delivery and financing to enable large scale investments in green infrastructure for public health, infrastructure resilience, and neighborhood benefits. As the threat of major storms increases, so too must our resolve to help communities protect themselves.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you, Chairman Cardin and Members of the Committee, for the opportunity to testify before you today. The EPA looks forward to building on its work with states in our region and across the nation to enable them to tackle the harmful effects of stormwater, which can lead to the kind of the devastation witnessed in Ellicott City. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.